



Catawba County Parks e-Newsletter Summer 2009 Edition

Exploring Catawba County Parks: Summer

There are so many wonderful and interesting things to see and explore at our parks during the summer! Did you know that you can see baby fawns of the White-tailed Deer, watch Tree Swallows catching insects to feed their young, or gaze at several dozen butterfly species that visit our garden plantings? We have put together a few “must see” lists for summer for those of you who are interested in getting out and exploring Catawba County’s natural heritage! Since there is always a Ranger on duty at each park, stop in and ask what good things have been seen recently and they will be happy to point you in the right direction.

Top Wildflowers: Green-headed Coneflower (June-July), Downy Blue Lobelia (June-September), Rose Pink (May-July), Smooth False-Foxglove (July-September)—pictured right, Pink Turtlehead (July-September), Rose Bay Rhododendron (May-June), Carolina Lily (July-August), Black Cohosh (June-July), Monkey Flower (July-August), and St. John’s Wort (July- September).



Top Nesting Birds: Bald Eagle, Osprey, Broad-winged Hawk, Yellow-billed Cuckoo, Tree Swallow, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Hooded Warbler, Ovenbird, Louisiana Waterthrush, Northern Parula, Black-and-white Warbler, Blue-headed Vireo, Red-eyed Vireo, Great Crested Flycatcher, Acadian Flycatcher, Scarlet Tanager, Summer Tanager and Blue Grosbeak.

Top Butterflies: Pipevine Swallowtail, Spicebush Swallowtail, Gray Hairstreak, Eastern-tailed Blue, American Snout, Great-Spangled Fritillary, Silvery Checkerspot, Red Admiral, Southern Cloudywing, and Silver-spotted Skipper.



Other Things to Notice: White-tailed Deer and their spotty fawns—pictured left, the buzzy songs of Cicadas, Luna Moths, River Cooters, emerald green Tiger Beetles, and Broad-headed Skinks. Also, watch for fungi blooms that occur one to two days after a rain. You can see 25 to 30 species under these conditions!

Catawba County Parks Has 10 Year Anniversary

Catawba County Parks has a birthday in July! With the opening of Riverbend Park on July 3, 1999, we set out to serve our fellow citizens in a way that no other department can. With almost half a million park visitors “under our belt”, we are still going strong, still enjoying being able to bring recreation and wildlife together, and looking forward to the next ten years. We will be having a celebration in the fall to mark the occasion. Look for more details in the Fall Edition of the Catawba County Parks Newsletter!

Facilities Available at Catawba County Parks

With summer upon us, who wants to have family gatherings or birthday parties at home? All three of our parks have facilities available to the public that can be reserved at very reasonable prices. All reservations need to be made in person and the fee paid at the time of reservation. Fees for picnic shelters are \$5 an hour or \$35 for the entire day and fees for meeting room or education building are \$35 per use.



Bakers Mountain Park has two picnic shelters available for reservations. The larger shelter has eight picnic tables and a grill. The smaller shelter has three tables but does not have a grill. Also available on a first come, first serve basis are a small shelter with two picnic tables and two uncovered picnic tables that each have their own grills.

Riverbend Park has a large seven-table shelter with a grill on each end as well as a 50-person capacity education building available for reservations. The building has two restrooms, tables, chairs, and air-conditioning for those hot summer afternoons! Also available on a first come, first serve basis is a small two-table shelter without a grill, three single picnic tables without grills, and four single tables with grills.

St Stephens Park has a four-table picnic shelter with a grill and a 30-person capacity air-conditioned meeting room. Tables and chairs are included in the meeting room

rental. There are also two additional picnic tables without grills available on a first come, first serve basis.

Spring Litter Sweep a Success

Although the turnout was not as high as usual, the Spring Litter Sweep held on April 18, was quite successful. Two-dozen Catawba Valley Community College (CVCC) Biology and Chemistry students volunteered their time, along with several others, to pick up trash along the stretch of



Highway 16 that borders Riverbend Park. Fifteen bags of trash and two bags of recyclables were collected by the group in the quarter mile stretch from Brenda's Grill to the Catawba River Bridge. Emily Whitely and Kim Browning, both of whom are instructors at CVCC volunteered their time afterward to have a cookout to say "thank you". If you are interested in joining in on future Litter Sweeps, watch for the date in "upcoming events" in future newsletters.

Upcoming Events:

Dragonflies of Bakers Mountain—Sunday, June 7, 2009—2 pm

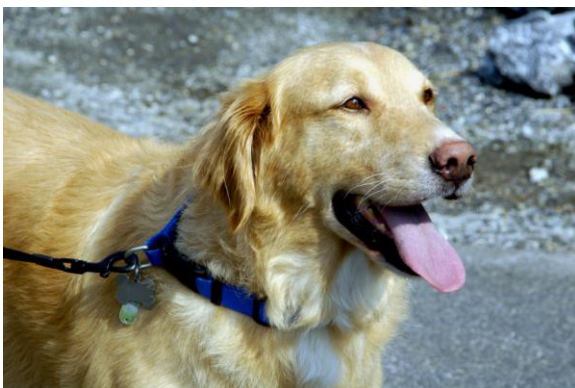
Does the idea of tracking a Dragonhunter intrigue you? Then join Park Ranger John



Sutton at Bakers Mountain Park for a dragonfly netting expedition. Many dragonflies call the mountain home and the Dragonhunter is one of the largest species we have. It prefers forested waters of the low mountains and foothills. Their main food source is, of course, the other dragonflies that we will be looking for! Other types of dragonflies that will be common in our area the first week of June include the Black-shouldered Spinyleg, the Common Green Darner, the Blue Dasher, the Twelve-spotted Skimmer—pictured left, the Halloween Pennant, the Carolina Saddlebags, and the Eastern Pondhawk. We will focus mainly on the "wetter" areas of the park in order to see the most variety. This will be about a two-mile hike and take about two hours. Please wear comfortable shoes and bring a magnifying glass or

binoculars if you have them. This hike will be limited to 25 participants. Contact Ranger John Sutton at jsutton@catawbacountync.gov or call 828-324-8461 to register.

Rabies Clinic—Saturday, June 13, 2009—10 am



The staff of Catawba County Animal Services will host a Rabies Vaccination and Adoption Clinic at Riverbend Park on Saturday, June 13. From 10 am through 2 pm they will be set up in the picnic shelter in the lower parking area, and will provide vaccinations and have dogs available for adoption. There will be a \$5 fee to cover the cost of the vaccination. If you are interested in viewing animals

that are available for adoption from Animal Services, please visit their website at:

<http://www.catawbacountync.gov/depts/es/animal.asp>

Exploring an American Beech Forest---Saturday, June 20, 2009—9 am

Would you like to learn more about the unique interconnecting relationships of the



forest? Then join Park Ranger Lori Owenby at Riverbend Park on a walk through a stand of mature American Beech. Although it takes a long time for this type of forest to become mature, it is one of the most diverse ecosystems in the southeast. We will not only learn about the trees themselves, but the fungi, lichens, aphids, and molds that make this forest type so unique. We will look for the uncommon Harvester Butterfly that feeds on the Beech Blight Aphid, as well as look for one of the smallest creatures in

nature—the Water Bear. Black Cohosh—pictured left, a beautiful woodland wildflower with a tall white bloom spike will be in full bloom and the forest floor will be lush with ferns and other wildflowers. This will be about a one and a half mile hike and should take about two hours. Please wear comfortable shoes and bring a magnifying glass if you have one. This hike will be limited to 25 participants. Contact Ranger Lori Owenby at lowenby@catawbacountync.gov or call 828-256-9157 to register.

NC Birding Trail Guide Launch—Thursday, June 25, 2009

Both Bakers Mountain Park and Riverbend Park are featured as destinations along the new North Carolina Birding Trail (NCBT). The “trail” is a series of destinations where motorists can stop to view a variety of birds. Guidebooks were created to include photos, maps, brief write-ups of featured areas and businesses that provide services that are beneficial to birders. In publishing the spiral bound



guidebooks, the state was divided into three regions: the Coastal Plain, the Piedmont, and the Mountain Regions. Each region has a separate guidebook. The book for our area, the Mountain Region, which is the last in the series, will be available on June 25, 2009. Catawba County Parks will have a booth at the official launch held at the North Carolina Arboretum in Asheville that day. A limited number of the guides will be available for sale at both parks after the launch. To learn more about the NC

Birding Trail, please visit their website at: www.ncbirdingtrail.org

Reptile and Amphibian Monitoring—Saturday, June 27, 2009--9 am

Join Park Ranger Alisha Hayes on a tour of Riverbend Parks newly installed reptile and amphibian monitoring project. We will visit several sets of coverboards where we will carefully lift the boards to see if any snakes, salamanders, or lizards are resting underneath. We may get lucky and find a Black Racer or a Slimy Salamander tucked away underneath! We will also check the drift fence to see if any frogs, turtles, or salamanders found their way into our traps overnight. We could find an Eastern Worm Snake, a Pickerel Frog or even one of the woodland mice species in our traps! Along the way, we will be



learning about the different reptiles and amphibians that call the park home and look for our favorite reptile—the Eastern Box Turtle—pictured right. This will be about a two-mile hike and should take about two and one half hours. Please wear comfortable shoes. This hike will be limited to 25 participants. Contact Ranger Alisha Hayes at ahayes@catawbacountync.gov or call 828-256-9157 to register.

Animal Signs—Saturday, July 11, 2009—2 pm

Join Park Ranger Tabitha Hope at Bakers Mountain Park to learn about the numerous animals that call the park home. We will be deciphering signs of animal activity and include learning about their tracks and habits. We will learn about the Fowler's Toads that live in the pond, learn how to tell the difference between a dog track and a coyote track, and tap on a few trees to see if anyone is home. We may get lucky and find a Southern Flying Squirrel or a Pileated Woodpecker by gently tapping on some dead snags with woodpecker holes in them! We will look for White-tailed Deer tracks and see how their paths meander through the forested terrain. Along the sandy creek bottoms, we will search for tracks of the Raccoons who love to hunt for crawdads at night. We should also see the Eastern Chipmunk—pictured right and will learn about its extensive tunnel systems and unique feeding habits. This will be a two-mile hike and take about two and one half hours. Please wear comfortable shoes and bring a magnifying glass or binoculars if you have them. This hike will be limited to 25 participants. Contact Ranger Tabitha Hope at thope@catawbacountync.gov or call 828-324-8461 to register.



Canoeing/Kayaking the Catawba River—Saturday, July 18, 2009—10 am

Join Park Ranger Lori Owenby on a leisurely two and a half hour paddle tour of the Catawba River. We will put in at the Canoe Access at Riverbend Park, paddle past our mile of shoreline, and take out about five miles downriver. We will have the opportunity to paddle around several small islands and explore the flora and fauna of the area in a completely new perspective. "Bird-wise", we will be looking for Bald Eagles, Osprey, Wood Ducks and Great Egrets. We should hear Baltimore and Orchard Orioles singing from the many Sycamore trees that line the shore. We might also see the canary yellow colored Prothonotary Warbler who nests in snags hanging over the river along the way. The scenery through this stretch of upper Lookout Shoals Lake is fantastic and includes a huge boulder outcropping that looks like it belongs more in the mountains than here in Catawba County! Bring a picnic lunch, sunscreen, and wear appropriate attire. Canoes/kayaks will not be provided. Contact Lori Owenby at lowenby@catawbacountync.gov or call 828-256-9157 to register.



Gardening for Birds, Bees and Butterflies—Saturday, July 25, 2009—9 am

Have you ever wondered what kind of flowers we grow in our parks and why? Then join Park Rangers Dwayne Martin and Alisha Hayes for a personal and in-depth tour of the garden plantings at Riverbend Park. Dwayne will give a short PowerPoint presentation entitled “Gardening for Hummingbirds and Butterflies” in the education building before heading out to look for butterflies, hummingbirds and other insects that use the plantings throughout the park. Some of the butterfly species we should see include, Common Buckeye, Monarch, American Lady, and Silver-spotted Skipper. If we are lucky, we may see an early Gulf Fritillary and some Hummingbird Sphinx Moths. Afterward, Alisha will put on her bee gear, give a short demonstration on the inner workings of a honeybee hive, and explain why their survival is so important to the local flower population. Please bring binoculars and/or a magnifying glass if you have them. This talk will be limited to 25 participants. Contact Ranger Alisha Hayes at ahayes@catawbacountync.gov or call 828-256-9157 to register.



Tree ID Walk—Saturday, August 8, 2009—9 am

Join Park Ranger Tabitha Hope at Bakers Mountain Park for a leisurely stroll around the one quarter mile paved ADA accessible trail to see one of the few remaining American Chestnut trees in our area. The American Chestnut used to be one of the most numerous trees in the Southern Appalachian forests, but the population has been decimated by the chestnut blight over the last century. We will see the side-by-side comparison of its leaf to the leaf of the Chestnut Oak that is very similar. The mountain is also home to other exceptional trees for our area such as the Table Mountain Pine and the Eastern Hemlock both of which are found more often in the mountainous environments to our west. Other species that we will encounter include the Mockernut Hickory, the Eastern Redbud, the Northern and Southern Red Oaks, and the Dwarf Pawpaw. This walk will be limited to 25 participants. Contact Ranger Tabitha Hope at thope@catawbacountync.gov or call 828-324-8461 to register.



Hummingbird Banding Demonstration Days
August 8 & 9, 15 & 16, 22 & 23, 29 & 30
7 am –10 am each day

Join the Park Rangers and other volunteers at Riverbend Park for a unique chance to see Ruby-throated Hummingbirds like you never have before! The response was so tremendous last August that we have extended our banding schedule this year to accommodate the number of folks who would like to join us.

Dwayne Martin is one of only 250 licensed hummingbird banders in the world, and one of only two in North Carolina! You will be able to

witness every aspect of banding a hummingbird--from their capture, to putting the tiny band on their leg, to “working them up” which includes weighing, measuring, aging and sexing each individual bird. We generally capture about two-dozen individuals during each session so there should be plenty to see and talk about. You will learn more about hummingbirds than you thought you would ever know and you will have the opportunity to participate in Catawba County Parks new Adopt-A-Hummingbird Program. Banding demonstrations will be cancelled if it is raining. Registration is not required.



Catawba County Parks Announces New Adopt-A-Hummingbird Program



Each August, Catawba County Park staff and volunteers capture and band hundreds of Ruby-throated Hummingbirds in northern Catawba County at Riverbend Park along the Catawba River. While some of the hummingbirds we band call the park home for the summer, others are just passing through on their long and miraculous migrations. Some of the hummingbirds will be recaptured year after year while others may never be heard from again. Every bird that we band here,

though, adds to our knowledge base and helps us understand the challenges and obstacles that these tiny jewels face. One of the hummingbirds that we captured last year on September 30, 2008—band # E76247—as a hatch-year male was recaptured just 12 days

later in Rockport, Texas by hummingbird bander Bron Rorex. This hummingbird made a 1,067-mile journey in less than two weeks! He averaged 89 miles a day! Now you can “share the thrill of discovery” and help support Catawba County Parks by adopting a hummingbird. The adoption will cost \$25 and that money will go into the Catawba County Parks Trust Fund where it will help us maintain our educational programming and act as a source of matching funds for future grant opportunities. Adopt one for your family or loved one! Each individual bird has only one sponsor—so your adoption is truly one of a kind! .

With each \$25 adoption, you will receive:

- A certificate suitable for framing with a digital photo of your hummingbird
- A chance to name the hummingbird that you are adopting
- The opportunity to release the bird in your hand after it is banded
- A synopsis of the Ruby-throated Hummingbirds life
- Updates by postcard if/when the adopted bird is re-captured

New Nature Blog

Park Ranger Lori Owenby has a new nature blog entitled [Reflections on the Catawba](#). It is her personal blog, which is filled with everything you should look for when visiting Riverbend Park! It tells you which wildflowers are blooming and where to find them, as well as regular updates on animal and bird sightings.

Carolina Thread Trail

The Carolina Thread Trail vision is a trail network for walking and biking. Its goal is to help promote personal interaction, physical activity, psychological health, and reduce effects of air pollution. The trail, would “weave together” a 15-county area with smaller trail “threads” extending out from the main trails. In the last couple years, the Carolina Thread Trail received approximately \$16.7 million from corporate, individual and non-profit donations to help with the trail planning process.

The 15-county area includes: Anson, Cabarrus, Catawba, Cherokee (DC), Chester, Cleveland, Gaston, Iredell, Lancaster, Lincoln, Mecklenburg, Rowan, Stanly, Union (NC) and York Counties. Five of these counties are well into the planning process. Catawba County has just started the process by appointing a steering committee. Existing plans will be used as the basis for the proposed trail placement.

More information on the Carolina Thread Trail can be seen at www.carolinathreadtrail.org